

FREE CONCERT SERIES IN THE RICHARD BRADSHAW AMPHITHEATRE

PRESENTED BY



TD READY
COMMITMENT

DANCE SERIES

November 14, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

CHAMPIONESS

SaMel Tanz

Melissa Hart, choreographer/dancer

Samantha Schleese, choreographer/dancer

Dancers/Collaborators

Lilly Giroux, dancer

Lauren Lyn, dancer

Renee Smith, dancer

Irma Villafuerte, dancer

Jaz Fairy J, dramaturge

THE PROGRAM

This performance will feature excerpts of SaMel Tanz's new work *CHAMPIONESS*, presented by DanceWorks. Their explosive choreography combines boxing, contemporary, street, and Latin dance to explore identity and mental health, while celebrating women. This will be an interactive movement experience followed by a Q&A session with the artists after the performance.

Photography, video, and audio recording are strictly prohibited during the performance.
You are welcome to take photos before and after the performance and are encouraged to share with us on:



@CanadianOpera

#FreeConcertSeries

Programming is subject to change. For complete up-to-date listings, and to sign up for email updates, visit coc.ca/FreeConcerts.

COMING UP NEXT AT THE FREE CONCERT SERIES

JAZZ SERIES

Wed. Nov. 15, 2023, 12–1 p.m.

AVATAAR

Global Jazz with AVATAAR

Worldview was released in 2021 to critical acclaim, and won a 2022 JUNO Award for Best Jazz Album (Group). The music is inspired by the deep musical traditions of India, Africa, and Brazil, rooted within the framework of modern jazz. In an innovative marriage of ancient and modern, this performance will feature driving grooves intersecting with cinematic atmospheres and soaring melodies, creating a fresh, emotive sonic experience.

INSTRUMENTAL SERIES

Tue. Nov. 21, 2023, 12–1 p.m.

Gene Hotta, viola

Golden Violin Award Winner 22/23

Violist and winner of the Schulich School of Music's 2022/2023 Golden Violin Award, Gene Hotta offers a collection of lyrical and complex works by Brahms, Bach, and Garth Knox.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

DANCE SERIES

Thu. Jan. 18, 2024, 12–1 p.m.

Dance Ontario

Preview of DanceWeekend'24

Dance Ontario presents a preview of DanceWeekend'24, celebrating their 30th anniversary.

This flagship event is a sumptuous multi-day dance festival chocked full of talent, performance, innovation and education, companies, culture, and exceptional opportunities. DanceWeekend has evolved into a vibrant must-see extravaganza featuring Ballet, Flamenco, Hip Hop, Indian Classical, Egyptian, Chinese, African, Contemporary (and everything in between and unfolding!).

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Samantha Schleese – Choreographer

With over 20 years of dance experience, Samantha Schleese's versatility is evident through her craft as a performer and instructor. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University and Master of Arts in Dance from University of Chichester, England.

Schleese is also a part of DEUCEnDIP, an all-female hip hop crew that recently celebrated their 10th anniversary. With the crew, Schleese has danced at events such as Pride, Unity, and Canada's Walk of Fame Festivals, WE DAY, Bazaar, and TeenzFav Music Awards and many more. Other credits include the Pan Am Games, Mirror Awards, Rusk Hair Show, Bud light Sensation Concert, IOGO, and CP24 Breakfast Television. Schleese has also worked and performed with such companies as Pratibha Arts, ABS Crew, and Evolution Dance Theatre.

Most recently, she received her Business Administration Diploma at Fanshawe College, is now a new mother, and excited to see how her dance career will evolve!

Melissa Hart – Choreographer

Melissa Hart is an established dance artist from Toronto with a Bachelor of Fine Arts specializing in Dance from York University. With over a decade of experience as a competitive figure skater coupled with her education in classical ballet and contemporary dance, and passion for street and Latin dance styles, she has a widened vocabulary and brings a unique perspective to the stage.

Hart is a member of hip hop dance crew DEUCEnDIP, who recently celebrated their 10th anniversary. With this crew, Hart has been fortunate to create and perform for international concerts such as WE DAY, Canada's Walk of Fame, and World Pride.

Hart is well-versed in salsa, bachata, Argentine tango, and samba dance styles. She has performed for the Toronto Salsa Congress and the Pan Am Games, and opened for International Latin artists such as Bad Bunny, Prince Royce, and Gente de Zona.

Working across Canada, Hart takes great pride in being an arts educator for youth outreach programs, focusing on inspiring and sharing with students the art of dance and self-expression in a safe environment. She has taught workshops for alternative education centers, Indigenous communities, newcomers, persons with special needs, and those living on the margins.

Hart has developed a passion for helping to direct, manage, and organize art showcases and is now the lead choreographer for Bix Co. Blog Bespoke Entertainment where she creates and organizes custom performances in a variety of outdoor and indoor venues.

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Renee Smith – Dancer

Renee Smith is a Black and Métis, Ontario-based dancer, teacher, and choreographer. Since graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Performance Dance program at Toronto Metropolitan University, Smith has received many choreography and performance opportunities. Her recent jobs as a backup dancer include pop artist Rêve, teaching for *On the Floor* dance convention, guest choreographer and guest teacher for multiple studios, drop-in centres, and high school programs, and in 2022 was selected as a choreographer for Peggy Bakers *Presence*.

Dancing since she was two years old, Smith continues to train, perform, teach, and choreograph in all styles of dance, including contemporary, modern, improv, jazz/jazz funk, ballet, hip hop, acro, musical theatre, tap, and fusion styles. Versatility and positive practice is her main focus as an artist.



Lauren Lyn – Dancer

Born and raised in Jamaica, Lauren Lyn was strongly influenced by music and dance. At the age of 13, she moved to Toronto where she was introduced to various forms of dance. Lyn furthered her training at George Brown College and the Joy of Dance Teacher Training program, where she received Top Honours in Canada. In 2011, Lyn was chosen to be a part of *So You Think You Can Dance Canada's* Top 20. Since then Lyn has been featured in numerous commercials, TV shows, music videos, and movies, and has performed with artists such as Nick Jonas, Lady Gaga, Anne-Marie, Flo Rida, Carly Rae Jepsen, Hedley, and more.



Lilly Giroux - Dancer

Born and raised in Toronto, Lilly Giroux began developing her dance fundamentals at an early age. Throughout school, she trained in the Claude Watson Art Program, and after graduating high school, she furthered her education in Erica Sobol's Gypsy Project and the Sidra Bell Dance Module. She has had the privilege of training under Medhi Walerski, Jermaine Spivey, Adi Salant, and Tilman O'Donnell, and has worked for many talented artists such as Christina Digiuseppe, Alvin Collantes, Rebecca Zizek, and Charles Moulton. Some notable performances include Fall for Dance North, Toronto Fringe Festival, Next Stage Festival, and Capezio Ace Awards.

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Irma Villafuerte - Dancer

Irma Villafuerte is a Salvadorian-Canadian dance artist in Tkaronto. A graduate of George Brown College's dance program, her training extends to Latin American, Caribbean, and Cuban Contemporary technique. She's performed in Rhubarb Festival, DanceWeekend Ontario, Aluna Theatre's RUTAS and Caminos Festival, Panamania 2015 at Nathan Phillips Square, La 12 Bienal de la Habana 2015 for (IN)DISCIPLINAS, Vanguardia Dance Projects Festival, International Dance Meeting by Danza Libre in Guantanamo, Cuba, CounterPulse Performing Diaspora in San Francisco, Mayworks Festival for Working People, among others. She is honoured to be part of works by Jaber Dance Theatre, Kahawi Dance Theatre, Alejandro

Ronceria, Victoria Mata, Kaeja D'dance, Ryan Lee, Derek Sangster, Arsenio Andrade, Sharon B. Moore, Darryl Tracy, Malgorzata Nowacka. Since 2016, she has been developing her choreographic practice through residencies with Dancemakers, Emerging Voices with Toronto Dance Theatre, and George Brown Dance Ensemble. She currently sits on the board of Adelheid Dance Projects, is a tdsbCREATES resident artist, and on the faculty at Casa Maiz's Semillas Maiz summer camp for Latin American children and Randolph College for the Performing Arts.



Jaz Fairy J - Dramaturge

Jaz Fairy J is a Barbadian-Canadian multi-hyphenate artist who specializes in improvisation with movement and sound. She is a performance artist, choreographer, dancer, singer/songwriter, movement director, outside eye/creative mentor, group facilitator, and skincare creator/small business owner. She believes that art and creation are a portal to the divine in all of us and continuously investigates how her work can create more space for healing.

Based in Toronto, Fairy J has created over 28 original dance works, presented in Toronto, Montreal, North Bay, Brooklyn, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Berlin, Birmingham (U.K.) and Sinop, Turkey. Choreographic commissions include Cahoots Theatre, Toronto Dance Theatre, Souleppier Theatre, Cawthra Park Secondary School, and Obsidian Theatre to name a few. Fairy J worked on Fox Production's *Rocky Horror Picture Show* under the direction of Kenny Ortega in 2016 and, in 2017, she was featured on CBC's *HERstory in Black* honouring 150 Black Canadian women making a significant contribution in Canada. Her solo *what do you see?* was presented by Summerworks in 2017, receiving an honourable mention for the Jon Kaplan Spotlight Award.

One of her most recent film collaborations *In my Bones*, produced and supported by Black Women Film, premiered last year. Her new multidisciplinary work *The Daily* was curated by Dance Immersion and co-presented with the National Arts Center in 2021.

Fairy J was one of the Facilitators for the 20-month Wildseed Center Black Art Fellowship and she has also been working as an outside eye/dramaturg since 2017, for fellow interdisciplinary artists working in dance, theatre, music, performance art, voice and sound creation.

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